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Emma McCallum-Spalaris
Humboldt State University

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October 31st, 2015

Emma McCallum-Spalaris

Sorrow and loss. Grief. Death seems more real now, more prominent, more relative to me. I have come to know how to grieve alone, how to cry without stopping in the middle of the night, to literally howl at the fucking moon; how dare it shine so brightly still. Realizing I am alone, learning to cope with it, feeling loneliness consume me, and being ok with it. Grief experienced so raw consumes me every day. Night is pin pricked with dreams about crying. I have changed, I have grown a shell, a scabby callous over those wounds. Grieving for friends lost, childhood lost, the loss of familiar and predictable, the loss of stability, and the loss of sanity.

In loss there is also gain. I have become more in tune with myself, my feelings, my desires; I live an absolute true version of me. No one is holding me back, not myself, not him, no one can because I am sharp and I am cut and I can cut back. I am learning and growing, from grief to anger to newness — a new home, new friends, a new awareness of myself, and that is enough. I must keep growing, because pain has taught me many lessons, and many lessons have not yet been discovered.

REFLECTION

I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this class. It was a gift. The freewrites were like nothing I had ever experienced before, because we were asked to write on and explore such personal topics. In other courses, I have been asked to write whatever came to mind, but none of that writing ever pushed as deeply into myself as the writing for this class did. Some days it was extremely difficult to write, due to exhaustion or not wanting to open those doors to the darker stuff inside me during a school day. Occasionally, my freewrites were simple fluffy drabbles and grocery lists, but when it was a good day, it

was a good day. Pieces I wrote for this class are more personal and emotional than I have ever written before and it was cathartic.

Being encouraged to explore writing styles and techniques, and just let myself use my most inner experiences as the basis for my writing was such a journey, and one I loved. As a science major, most of the writing I do during a semester is research reports, abstracts and data collections. It was so comfortable to know I could have a safe space to write for 15 minutes once or twice a week, and write from the soul, from my raw self. Towards the end of the semester I started to really use my freewrites as a mode of exploration of my own mental illnesses and struggles with depression and severe anxiety.

The freewrites helped me start writing more outside of class as well, even attempting poetry. Writing feels like second nature now, it feels like a natural way to process my emotions and sort myself out, and I have seen the benefits of continuing to write, or keep a journal. I am so grateful to have such an encouraging teacher regarding creative self-exploration through writing. The freewrites were incredibly important parts of my semester, and for that I am thankful.